

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-11

WASHINGTON POST
20 August 1983

Uneasy Europeans Praise U.S.

'Mea Culpa' in Klaus Barbie Case

By William Drozdiak
Washington Post Foreign Service

BONN, Aug. 19—Washington's cathartic apology to Paris for the wrongdoing of U.S. agents who shielded accused Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie from arrest has evoked muted expressions of admiration, tinged with envy, in France and West Germany, where the bizarre case of the so-called "butcher of Lyons" is expected to cause shame and embarrassment for years to come.

Newspapers in both countries expressed praise and respect for the U.S. Justice Department's 218-page report, released Tuesday, which admitted that the U.S. Army's Counterintelligence Corps protected Barbie from French officials and later helped him find refuge in Bolivia.

The way the U.S. government handled the Barbie affair, wrote the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* in a commentary typical of many, showed "a powerful and impressive capacity for democratic self-purging."

Such words of esteem for belated American justice were accompanied in some journals by oblique expressions of yearning for more candid treatment of historical guilt at home. For while France and West Germany may have abandoned enmity in favor of neighborly friendship, the urge to forget or distort the war years warps some modern realities.

The U.S. ambassador to West Germany, Arthur Burns, has said he is appalled by the ignorance of history shown by young Germans. Overwhelmed by the tragedy of the war, parents and teachers—if they discuss it at all—usually describe the Third Reich as a monstrous aberration whose hierarchy derived not from German history but from disembodied evil.

This reluctance to grapple with the memories of a painful era, Burns thinks, explains

to some extent the dismal image some young West Germans have of the United States because they have never learned the role the United States played in rebuilding West Germany from the ashes of war.

More than other European countries, France also fears that the lessons of history will be lost on a new generation of West Germans. But for Paris, the latent threat for the future lies in a resurgence of nationalism that might impel the two Germanys to seek reunification in a neutralist state that appeases the Soviet Union.

Many West Germans scoff at such assertions and say the French have a penchant for distorting history. The heroic tales of anti-Nazi resistance during the war, as sundry accounts have shown, were sometimes exaggerated and often sullied by sordid truths about widespread French collaboration with the German occupation.

If Barbie takes the stand and admits that, as Gestapo chief in Lyons, he was responsible for the deaths of hundreds, he is expected to reveal tales of collaboration that will jolt France's sense of history.

The most intriguing subject demanding explanation concerns the circumstances leading to the arrest in 1943 of Resistance leader Jean Moulin, who later died as Barbie's captive. Moulin allegedly was betrayed by his own people, and Barbie is said to know the names of key Gestapo collaborators.

Some West Germans who feel that France has basked too long in undeserved glory take smug satisfaction in a trial that may produce a grim portrait of French national honor.

The Barbie case, wrote the *Rheinpfalz* newspaper in Chancellor Helmut Kohl's home town of Ludwigshafen, will "finally answer the question [of whether] there was a French variety of fascism and anti-Semitism in occupied France."

"It seems to be indisputable," the paper

went on, that the Gestapo had many assistants in occupied France and that the regular gendarmerie distinguished itself, without pressure from the Germans, in the abduction of French Jews."

Yet by dwelling so insistently on the historical discomfort that Barbie's arrest and planned trial is causing in France, the Germans too seem to be seeking refuge from questions of guilt and honor.

Like other Nazis accused of war crimes, Barbie rarely has any national traits ascribed to him, but instead is more often than not labeled a "Gestapo thug."

In reflecting on how the "moral no man's land" in postwar years created strange anti-communist bedfellows like Barbie and American secret agents, the political weekly *Die Zeit* could have been writing about future ironies of history when it said this week, "The companionship of the hunters and the hunted is by no means inconceivable today."